

IN HONOR OF PRIVATE FIRST CLASS STEVEN SIRKO

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, it is with the heaviest heart that I rise today to express the heartfelt condolences of a grateful Nation and to honor the life of Private First Class Steven Frederick Sirko, who passed away on April 17 while serving in Iraq.

Steven served our country as a U.S. Army battalion medic. He was scheduled to return to his home in Statesville, North Carolina, in August. Steven was a loving husband, son, and brother. He leaves behind his wife, Virginia Downs Sirko; his mother, Summer Lipford; and stepfather, Steven Lipford; his father, Rick Sirko; and stepmother, Rose Sirko; his sisters; and his brother.

May good bless them and comfort them during this very difficult time. We owe this brave soldier and his family a tremendous debt of gratitude for his selfless service and sacrifice. Our Nation could not maintain its freedom and security without heroes like Steven who make the ultimate sacrifice.

Americans, as well as Iraqis, owe their liberty to Steven and his comrades who came before him. Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring PFC Steven Sirko.

CRISIS IN THE FEDERAL PRISON SYSTEM

(Mr. CHANDLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CHANDLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight a serious security risk to our communities. Our Federal prison system faces a crisis that we can no longer ignore.

The inmate population continues to reach record highs; yet the administration and Congress failed to provide the funding to keep our prisons secure. This has caused overcrowding and a shortage in correctional staff.

Our prisons are now more dangerous and our communities are being put in jeopardy. For example, last July, Lexington, Kentucky, an inmate escaped from the Lexington Federal Medical Center because there were fewer than 20 staff members supervising almost 2,000 inmates.

He was eventually caught. Thankfully, no one in the community was seriously injured. However, if we do not start funding our Federal prison systems at a level that provides adequate staff, we may not be as fortunate next time.

I urge my colleagues and the administration to provide sufficient funding to the Federal prison system.

SOLVING THE CHALLENGES FACING SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to ad-

dress the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, over the past 70 years, Congress has tried repeatedly to fix the Social Security program. The payroll tax has been raised 22 times, and the amount of Social Security benefits taxed has increased from zero to 85 percent.

Unfortunately, these changes did not solve the real challenges threatening the retirement of millions of Americans. Raising payroll taxes simply postpones the bankruptcy and would not be a permanent solution for Social Security.

On Thursday, President Bush further outlined his proposal to provide a lasting solution for Social Security. Today, the Washington Times reported that the Heritage Foundation and the CATO Institute strongly support President Bush's proposal. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is correct. Unfortunately, Democrats have yet to offer any positive suggestions that would fix Social Security.

Procrastination will not solve the problem. We must act now to protect benefits for today's retirees and strengthen benefits for future generations.

In conclusion, God bless our troops. We will never forget September 11.

□ 1415

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 513

Mr. McNULTY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 513.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

SOCIAL SECURITY SOLUTIONS

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday our President told the Nation that he was willing to listen to any ideas from anyone and was willing to share the credit for a solution to Social Security problems.

Finding a solution requires more than just complaining and my colleagues on the other side would like you to believe that they have a plan, but plans require more than just complaints.

A recent national poll by Harvard University found that 7 out of 10 college students do not believe that Social Security will be there for them. Younger workers know that the government has used their Social Security money for other programs. They also understand voluntary personal accounts offer a better way to provide security for them.

And it is only fair. In past years, retirees received a return of 10 percent and more from Social Security. Today that return is barely 1.5 percent and that is not fair to younger Americans. Younger workers today are much more familiar with investments through 401(k) plans offered which employers, workers know the power of compound interest and how their contributions to these accounts grow steady.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge Members of the House and Senate to have a vision for Social Security one of fairness for all Americans.

ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, this is National Uninsured Week. In my home State of Texas, there are a significant number of people who are uninsured.

The number of uninsured has increased for the third year in a row and that is largely because of the drop of the employer based coverage.

Mr. Speaker, there is a tool, there is a lever we can pull to help stop the drop off in employer based coverage. That lever is called association health plans. In fact, this House passed association health plans several times during the 108th Congress. The problem is it has never been taken up by the other body.

What are association health plans? This is the ability for small businesses of a similar business model to band together and get the purchasing power of a large corporation in order to hold the cost down of providing insurance to their members.

Now, nearly 63 percent of all uninsured workers are employed by small businesses with fewer than 100 employees. It is estimated that association health plans would enable some 8 million currently uninsured individuals to receive coverage.

Mr. Speaker, I was so encouraged because the chairman of the relevant Senate committee said this year they were going to seriously take up association health plans. In fact, he has charged people on both sides of this question to come together and find solutions to finally allow association health plans to be available in this country.

END FILIBUSTERS

(Mr. SMITH of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, since 2003 Senate Democrats have filibustered or threatened to filibuster ten of the President's circuit court nominees. This is unprecedented.

Some believe that applying the filibuster to judicial nominations is a long and revered Senate tradition. Not so.